

# Each Will Cultivate His Own Acre and His Own Ideals on Fellowship Farm



New York Fellowship Farmers in Conclave at a Downtown Restaurant.

There Is To Be Established Near This City a Colony Where Educated and Congenial Persons Will Join the Back-to-the-Land Movement Individually and Co-operatively with a View Both to Pleasure and to Profit.

**A**FTER seventy years of more or less profound slumber the co-operative colony idea has reawakened in this country. Groups of men and women, believers in the mission of co-operation to help solve the economic and social problems of our time, have been established in the suburbs of New York, Boston, Reading, Penn., and Los Angeles, and other groups are being established elsewhere. One of the colonies, at Westwood, Mass., is six years old and thriving mightily. The others have been in existence for two years or less, and might be considered still in the experimental stage. The New York enterprise was launched quite recently, and is obtaining a site in New Jersey within commuting distance of the metropolis. All these groups are organized on the same general principles and by a band of enthusiasts who call themselves the Fellowship Farms Founders' Association. The president of the association is George Elmer Littlefield, a small, sturdy faced, snow-haired man, with a poetic temperament, much energy and a talking style that is extremely magnetic. He is the founder of the Westwood colony, is a Har-

vard graduate, a practical printer and farmer, and was a minister of the Gospel for fourteen years.

Mr. Littlefield could give points to Robert Owen, who first discovered the need and virtue of co-operation, and he could instruct Fourier, the French genius who laid out co-operation on a universal and mathematical basis. Fourierite colonies were quite the rage in America around the 40's and 50's, and everybody discussed the question whether an ideal "phalanx" would consist of 1,548 members, what to do with the twelve passions of man and how many hours ought to be devoted to love making.

The most noted of the colonies was Brook Farm, where Emerson, Hawthorne, Margaret Fuller and Charles A. Dana tried out the co-operative theory as it was then understood. There were other groups, of a religious type, which sprang up in different parts of the country. Most of these enterprises were based

on a theory of "utopian socialism," being designed to regenerate the world while superseding a competitive industrial system with co-operation. They did not last very long. A few attempts at revivals were made in the passing decades, notably at Ruskin, Tenn., in the 90's.

The utopian colonies are mentioned chiefly because they are different from the co-operative schemes now being developed. While many of those interested in the modern idea are socialists, they do not claim they are manufacturing a panacea for the world's woes or establishing a model of the co-operative commonwealth. Their principal aim is to "get back to the land," till it in accordance with scientific methods, live in a congenial society and escape as far as may be the thrall of rent and labor for hire. A number of Fellowship Farmers are commuters who derive their income from city work and consider their colony habitation merely a superior place in which to live and bring up a family.

In the old utopian schemes all property was held in common and the members stood to lose everything when the



A \$100 Home on Fellowship Farm.



Oranges and Snow Adjoining Los Angeles Fellowship Farm

date business methods, its combined individualist and collectivist aspect, fitting human nature and coming at the psychological and economic moment, takes advantage of the impetus landward and organizes those among the workers whose passion for freedom, fellowship, independence and security is so intense that, with an innate love of the land and country life, the proposition of

A little land; a job at hand;  
A little home of your own;  
A sweetheart true to share with you.  
As king and queen on a throne.

is irresistible." (Applause.)

Mr. Littlefield continues:

"The plan gets together a group of from twenty to one hundred such comrades, and through co-operative purchase and experienced superintendence, places a comparatively high class and high priced farm, near some large city, within the reach of men and women whose wages or salaries are so meagre as to prohibit their ownership of anything, surely not valuable real estate, alone and unorganized. It surveys, allots holdings, starts home building and gives a general picturesque and right direction of development to the colony the first year. From one to three acres of land are owned by individual members, and there is a ten-acre common tract under expert management (a model for the individual gardens, intensive culture) which should pay for the whole farm and ultimately give each member of the group his or her personal holding in fee simple, free, besides a pro rata interest in all the business, benefits, etc., of the association, which markets all produce through its own store and hotel.

"The oldest of the four Fellowship farms now established has a goodly seventy-five-acre tract in beautiful Westwood, Mass., fourteen miles from Boston, bought co-operatively with \$250 monthly payments by forty workers who individually have acre holdings and collectively own the other thirty-five acres, buildings and so on. The colony is now in its sixth year—a success in collective

buying and subdivision of land at cost, and assuring social and rising values at the start—an example of what any group of workers can do. Here has been demonstrated that a family, living in its own home, with a sure and pleasant occupation on its own acre, can get the full product of its labor, equal to \$500 or more a season. This means security, freedom and fellowship, the basis of ideal achievement.

"Norwood Fellowship Farm was founded in 1911, four miles from the Westwood group. It comprises seventy-six acres of land, with forty-four holdings for individual members. It is beautifully situated in the most thriving town of Massachusetts, on the ridge overlooking the Neponset Valley, with Blue Hill Observatory just across. This colony began with collective operation of its collective holdings, and will co-operatively earn dividends sufficient in ten years to pay for the whole capitalization of \$20,000, thus refunding all payments of the members and giving an old age pension besides.

"Los Angeles Fellowship Farm is located in the wonderful San Gabriel Valley, eighteen miles east of Los Angeles, in the town of Puente. It has eighty-three holdings and is capitalized for \$48,000. On account of the high cost of land—much higher than in the East—it was necessary for the members to pay \$100 down and \$6 a month for forty-four months. Founded in 1912, it started with its deed and store, community horse and cow. Its individual allotments and twelve-acre company garden, which is to pay its whole capitalization in ten years. A hotel or inn and an auto truck for delivery of produce to city patrons are its next requirements. An irrigation project to cost about \$4,000 is under way. This group can work their land twelve months in the year and enjoy the most beautiful scenery in the world—tropical in valley, arctic on the mountains, and a sunny, exhilarating climate all through the year. There is no limit to the productivity of

for cash payment, and the title to this individual holding immediately passes to the buyer. The purchaser who has title to his own land cannot lose it, even though the general enterprise should fail. It is like a limited liability company, and the extent of one's liability is the price of his individual plot. No individual is allowed to hold more than three acres, and only one vote and one share of stock belongs to each member regardless of the extent of his land holding. Besides owning his own plot of ground, each member has the benefits and shares the profits of the community holdings and enterprises. Between \$10,000 and \$20,000 is required to buy land for a project of this scale within commuting reach of New York. An equal sum should be expended to improve the property and establish community enterprises.

"Reading, Penn., Fellowship Farm was started June 11. Since land is cheap in that locality, shares are only \$25 down and \$2 a month for forty-four months. There will be 60 to 100 members in the group.

"The new colonies promise in their personnel as educated, progressive, refined and congenial a group of persons as ever came together. Among those enrolled in the New York group are teachers, lawyers, writers, artists and city folk of various occupations, but with some actual experience of farm life. C. H. Poole is president. Secretary Edward Wheat is one of several practical farmers in the group. They are not all of the same race, religion or politics, but all are inspired with the same progressive ideals. Somehow the persons we would not want are not attracted to us, and one of the most charming surprises of this whole movement is the unusual variety of choice souls who come to add their splendid enthusiasm or contribute their ideal uplifts to ours. The mere onlooker little imagines the spiritual quality that gathers to a place like this and mingles with the soil and its labor. No wonder, as we stand on our acres and contem-



George Elmer Littlefield Who is Head and Front of the Fellowship Farm Movement

plate our work and hope, that one exclaims, 'All this—and heaven, too!'

"The plan places on the ground an expert instructor in gardening and poultry, the first reason to assure the fellowship farmers of that farm success from the start. Each colony is urged to place the expert instructor, as manager, over eight to ten acres of the group's common holding, to operate a collective garden and poultry plant (with cows and hogs, also, if deemed best), the profits of this plant to pay, as much as possible, for the whole farm, and thus ultimately give the individual holdings free to the members. Good business and wide awake directors should accomplish this end, after the mortgage on the land is cleared, continue to pay dividends to each member pro rata. This will provide horse-tool service on call for individual members, and give the women a chance to have heavy labor exchanged for their lighter work or their share of dividend or truck from the co-operative garden.

"The triple purpose of the Fellowship Farm Plan is to establish workers in their own homes, on their own land, at their own jobs, eliminating the real estate speculation; to provide for leisure and fellowship to realize one's ideals, and at the same time to start the group toward such voluntary co-operative works as each group may find most productive of wealth and progress. There can be no individual failures in making a livelihood from the start, provided the members follow the teaching and guidance of the expert instructor, who has been trained along the successful lines of Fellowship Farm No. 1, at Westwood, Mass. Usually the organization, financial, purchasing and instructive powers for the first year of a colony's life are in trust for the colony in the hands of the Fellowship Farm Founders' Association. This association puts prospective members in touch with each other, sifts out the unit by temperament or otherwise, aids in the location of a farm site, to be approved by the membership of the group, collects and banks fees, dues and loans for the first year, and pays the first sum and the next three quarterly payments of principal and interest, taxes, etc., on the farm, besides looking after deeds and other legal documents.

"After the purchase of the land many details of allotment, building, fowls for breeding, coop construction, incubators, brooders and yards, garden plans, tools, trees, plants, seeds, ploughing, harrowing and so on are attended to, chiefly by the expert instructor gardener. Much of the buying of materials and of household supplies is done co-operatively and with great saving. As many as possible of the members of a new group are urged to go on to their holdings the first spring, but some of the members do not immediately occupy and work their acres. A few may join merely to help the colony and have a camping spot amid congenial associates, with a thought that in case of misfortune and need they, too, can come to their acre as a haven of life and security. The natural product of absentee acres goes to the collective benefit.

"Five sources of work and income are open to Fellowship Farmers: Gardens and poultry, the dividends from co-operative gardening, home industries, summer guests, and occasional jobs in town or city. Five or six members can, if they wish, always have employment at day's pay working for other members. When a sufficient number of Fellowship Farms are organized they will be offered co-operative union in the Federated Farms Association, and, with their varied arts and crafts industries besides farm products, local stores and central co-operative exchange, be able almost wholly to supply each other's necessities on a time and labor basis. For the first few years the question of market solves itself—vacation friends camping on the ground just when harvest begins in summer, the folk passing by in carriages and automobiles, as well as nearness to the city, make ready sales at first prices at our very doors.



"Goosies" Fellowship Farm, Westwood, Mass.

enterprise failed. In the new plan there is individual ownership of an acre or more of ground, and if the enterprise fails the owner still has his land and whatever buildings he has put on it.

The co-operative feature covers only a tract of land held for common use and such buildings, tools and improvements as are required by the community in general. It is apparent that the new idea caters to the individual as well as to the group. There is no attempt to impose ironclad regulations or to mould human nature into a common pattern. The restrictions upon members are a minimum necessary to carry out the general group plan, and are even less onerous than those in a country club of wealthy membership. There is a rich club in Pennsylvania which forbids dress suits on its premises; the Fellowship Farmers do not even ban bathing suits.

George Elmer Littlefield, the chief

move and active spirit of the Fellowship Farm plan, descants thusly of what has been, is and will be done in the new co-operative way:

"The great landward movement of the masses of the people is probably the sanest, healthiest, surest pledge of the immediate future welfare and independence of America since the opening of the century. 'Back to the land' and 'the land back to the people' are second only in importance to the world-wide movement of socialism. Many times in the past schemes and efforts to get the land and the people together in colonies have been tried, with disastrous results. The careful study of the causes of failure reveal five principal rocks of disaster— isolation, fanaticism, pure communism, uncompromising anarchism and unprofitable time.

"The Fellowship Farm plan, with its settlement near large cities, its up-to-